

The Staff of Troy

by Olorin

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Summary: An interesting trio visit Professor Dumbledore

1. Prologue

"But you're a Muggle!" cried Professor McGonagall. The man across the desk from her and Dumbledore gave her a quizzical look, as did his two associates. "You're not even supposed to know that we exist. How did you find Hogwarts and -"

"Minerva, please, this is not the time for that. Please, go on"

The austere British gentleman across from Dumbledore and McGonagal, hesitated then continued. "Well, in answer to your question, I have an ... associate who happens to also be an acquaintance of the good Professor Dumbledore. I showed him the evidence, and he suggested that I should bring this matter to your attention and offer our assistance."

Dumbledore smiled slyly. "This associate, would he happen to be a werewolf?"

With a smile, "Yes, Professor Lupin has been very helpful to a friend of mine." The girl to his left blushed a little, her ears nearly as red as her hair. "When I found that the Staff of Troy had been unearthed and that Colin Misbane had acquired it, I felt that this would be somewhat more than my ... team could handle." At the word "team", the other girl with him curled up her nose slightly and coughed, drawing an annoyed look from the gentleman.

Professor McGonagal frowned. "I'm not entirely familiar with this artifact."

Professor Dumbledore sighed. "We'll need Professors Flitwick and Binns to give us the complete story, but as far as I remember it, the Staff of Troy is an infiltration charm. The bearer of the staff can enter anywhere without detection, by masquerading as something or

someone harmless. It's not all powerful, but it could be very dangerous. Why specifically did Remus send you to us?"

"Apparently, you have a nexus of dark magic here, something called the 'Forbidden Forest?'"

"Yes. It adjoins the campus. You believe that Misbane and the Staff are hiding in the forest?"

"No, actually I think they were hiding in the forest. I believe they are by now in the school. Remus believes that Colin is looking for something in the school, some great source of power."

"Well, then we really have very little choice. How can you be of assistance to us?"

"While I don't have any kind of innate magical ability, I do have some experience in fighting dark forces. I have been both researched and fought them for many years. My companions also have some abilities that may be of assistance."

"I see. You actually have come at an opportune time. We are once again" he said with some chagrin "without a Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher. While you may never have heard of me before, I know and respect your history well. Mr Rupert Giles, welcome to the faculty of Hogwarts."

"But Albus, he's a MUGGLE!" ...

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Please submit reviews to tell me if you would be interested in this story ...

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2. Introductions

The staff of Troy - Part 1

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The blonde girl spoke up for the first time. "Excuse me, what's a Muggle?"

Professor McGonagal smiled awkwardly. "Muggle is our word for people who have no magical ability. It's not meant unkindly, but you understand that we do need a name for your people, and that's the one that has happened to stick. Please don't be offended by it."

Professor Dumbledore spoke up. "Actually, it would seem to me that only one of you is a true Muggle. Miss Rosenberg, I believe you are an apprentice witch yourself?"

"Please, call me Willow," the red-haired girl said. "I started getting involved about two or three years ago. I'm not doing anything special, just some spells and potions and stuff."

"Don't denigrate your talent, however immature it is, my dear young lady. Of course, while you're here, we can help you expand your abilities." Turning to the blonde girl with Mr. Giles, "And Miss Buffy Summers. Who in the magical world could possibly call the Slayer a Muggle."

Professor McGonagall's eyes grew wide. "My dear girl, my humblest apologies. I had no idea you were this generation's Chosen One."

"No big deal. It's not as famous a role as you might expect. Doesn't even get me a table at Maxine's" Buffy smiled wryly back.

"Mr Giles, I actually think you may be benefit to the school. As I said we are in need of a Defense Against the Dark Arts professor this term. As a former member of the Watcher's Council, your experience will be invaluable. You have, performed some magic havn't you"

"Well, the occasional spell needed to assist Buffy."

"Have you ever destroyed a dark artifact?"

"I don't suppose you've heard of the Glove of Armagon.", Giles said with only the slightest trace of irony.

"You'll do," said Professor McGonagall, shuddering visibly.

After a few moment's thought, Professor Dumbledore nodded his head. "It will do our students some good to learn defenses that don't strictly require magic. At the least they won't be defenseless if they're hit with a blanketing spell. We will have to find some way for you to perform magic in class to keep the students from getting suspicious."

"Willow, you will be assigned to Professor Flitwick, our Charms Master, as a teaching assistant. Your current abilities should do you well there."

"Now Miss Summers, I'm at a bit of a loss as to what to do with you, but I think I have a glimmer of an idea. A previous professor started a rather short lived dueling club. I think it should begin again, and you will be in charge of it. We'll work out some way to help you with the magic also."

The cuckoo clock in the corner barked five and a half times. "Ah, the dinner bell. Let's go meet the students."

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Harry and Ron dropped noisily onto the bench at the Gryffindor table as Hermione, sitting across from them pursed her lips in disapproval. "Can't you two ever be on time?"

Harry stifled a rude noise while Ron rolled his eyes. "Sorry mother, it won't happen again," blurted Ron to Hermione's glare.

"We were trying to get Neville out. Fred thought it'd be funny to put

an octopus charm on his bed. Neville was wrapped up so tightly in his blankets he could barely breathe."

"So I guess Fred's shooting for George's most detentions in a single term record?" Hermione asked.

"Yeah, but if he breaks it too badly he'll need that old hourglass of yours to serve them all."

At this moment, Professor Dumbledore stood and looked around the dining hall as his spoon banged on his glass (of its own accord.) "I have some good news. We are fortunate enough to have found a replacement for Professor Wiggle while he's on his alternity leave. Allow me to introduce Professor Rupert Giles, the acting professor for Defense Against the Dark Arts." Curious applause followed as Giles stood and nervously bowed to the students.

"We also have two other faculty members to introduce. Professor Flitwick has a new assistant, an American witch named Willow Rosenberg." All eyes moved to Willow, who was staring at the ceiling image of the night sky above. Buffy elbowed her, then glanced up to see what she was looking at. After a few seconds, both of them jumped a little when Giles cleared his throat. Willow reddened once again, then waved at the students. With a smile on his face Dumbledore continued, "She will be addressed by you as Instructor. And finally, for those of you who joined our Dueling club two years ago, we have a new instructor for the club, Miss Buffy Summers." Buffy waved tentatively at the students.

"Harry, get a load of Malfoy," Ron whispered. Harry glanced at the Slytherin table. Draco Malfoy, Harry's worst enemy (at least of his own age) was staring quite noticeably at the new dueling instructor. He was so entranced that he didn't even notice Goyle stealing the sausages off his plate. "Draco in love! I bet he's quivering inside at the unfamiliarity of it."

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 "That is too funny. Maybe we can use this to get him off my back about Ginny." Ron almost spilled his milk because he started laughing. "Oh, are you gonna go on about it too?"

"I can't help it, Harry, it's too funny. Even Percy grinned a little when he saw her looking at you."

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Willow and Buffy plopped down on the beds in their room. "So, what do you think? Isn't this too cool?" Willow asked.

"I'm very overwhelmed right now. When Giles told me about this school, he didn't exactly make it sound so organized or official. I guess I expected a couple of witches teaching kids in the kitchen. This is, amazing."

"I know, the idea of a whole world just outside our view is just freaky. I thought we'd seen everything out there with our own little supernatural wonderland, but this is ..." Willow trailed off.

"Are you ready, ladies?" Professor McGonagall peeked in the door.

"Yes, ma'am, I can't wait to see the school." Willow jumped up. Both she and Buffy followed the professor out. At the end of the corridor, they stepped through the painting guarding the visiting faculty quarters as the lady in the burgundy dress waved goodbye.

"I'll only be showing you the classrooms and the main halls tonite, as it's so late. Tomorrow, we'll see about a more substantial tour. Oh and Willow, we have a trip to take tomorrow. I think you should take something special away from this venture." McGonagall said, winking cryptically.

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Meanwhile, Professor Dumbledore was taking tea with Giles. "That is an beautiful bird you have there, Professor." Giles said as he admired Fawkes. "What breed is it?"

"A phoenix, one of the most faithful pets a person can have. She's currently at her prime of plumage."

"How extraordinary. I've never before seen one, but inside I have always suspected and hoped they really did exist."

"Even with your experience, you seem much less surprised than I expected at all this."

"Yes, of course. I've perhaps seen enough to keep me calm in about any situation, I expect. I guess living on a Hellmouth will do that to you."

Albus chuckled. "I remember my own visits as a youngster to places similar to that. Well, on to happier thoughts. Shall we take the tour?"

"By all means. I've not been in a castle since I left England for Sunnydale, and I'm a little homesick. By the way, you mentioned earlier that you'd need to find a way for me to do magic in class. How do you propose to disguise the fact that I'm a 'Muggle', " he said with some amount of humour.

Professor Dumbledore chuckled. "We'll think of something, I'm sure. Please, let me apologize again for the Muggle comments. Professor McGonagall meant no harm."

"Think nothing of it. We don't tell very many people about the Slayer, either. It does tend to have an adverse affect on our relations with the police department."

Chuckling, the two of them walked down the hall toward the classrooms.

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The next morning, Willow, Buffy and Professor McGonagall were standing in front of the fireplace. "Tell me again what I'm supposed to do with this powder stuff?" Buffy said as she stared at the Floo powder

in her hand.

"Throw it in the fireplace, jump in and say 'Diagon Alley.' Get out when you are at the right grate. You'll know."

Buffy shook her head, then threw it in. She jumped in and shouted 'Diagon Alley!' She was totally unprepared for what happened next.

"You can go next. I'll follow so I can check on you on the way." Professor McGonagall said. Willow nodded and imitated Buffy's actions. Moment's later, she was in Flourish and Blott's, coughing up soot. Professor McGonagall appeared behind her. "Are you okay, dear?"

"Cough. Yes, I think I'm fine. Where are we?"

"Diagon Alley, London. This is the main shopping district for magical folk"

Suddenly, Willow looked around in worry, "Where's Buffy? She should be right here, shouldn't she?"

Professor McGonagall already had her wand out and chanted "Locatamora lumiera." The end of the wand began to glow brightly, but only on one side. Professor McGonagall turned to the left and the glow moved to the tip. "Oh bother, let's go! She's in Knockturn Alley."

"What, where --" Willow didn't have time to finish as the professor pulled her out the door.

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Buffy got to her feet and brushed off the dust. She looked around, and suddenly felt at home, in a very warped sense of the way. She was in a pub, much like the Bronze and she was surrounded by demons and vampires.

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Notes:

Thanks for the good reviews for the prologue. I had already planned to make McGonagall lighten up, but thanks for the constructive criticism. Sorry for reusing the floo powder plot device, but I imagine it's pretty easy to misuse anyway, at least the first time.

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people.

3. Preparations

The Staff of Troy - 3

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Buffy looked around her again. 'This can't be happening,' she thought, reaching into her back pocket for a stake.

"Hey, missy, you can't pull that bloody thing out in 'ere, you'll cause a riot." called a voice behind her.

She turned to see a perfectly ugly person behind the bar. "Who are you?"

"I'm the propr'ter o' this 'ere drinkin' 'stablishment. Figaro's the name," he drawled in his thick accent, putting his hand out for her to shake.

Buffy looked tentatively around the room. Everyone was looking at her worriedly. She held out her hand to Figaro, who gave it a good healthy shake. The rest of the pub's patrons turned back to their conversations. And their drinks.

"I must say, I've seen a lot o' pretty lasses come out o' that grate, but not one o' youse has ever had a piece of wood that big in her pocket. 'Course," he added slyly "none o' youse has ever been a Slayer before." with a wink.

"How do you know who I am?" Buffy asked warily.

Figaro burst out laughing. "Didn't you see the way all the vamps moved to the other room when you popped out? Don't know why they bothered themselves. My bar's off limits to feeding and staking. Pride meself with a clean establishment. Here, sit lass, and have something to steady yerself, on the house." He placed a tall glass of something that looked dark and thick enough for a spoon to stand up in.

Buffy reached out to the glass and moved it to her mouth, eying Figaro the whole time. She took a sip and was startled to find out that it was beer, albeit the strongest she had ever tasted. "What in the world is this stuff?"

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 "'What is this stuff'" he croaked, mocking her. "Why 'that stuff' is Guinness, the finest drink you'll ever have, 'sides your mother's milk" he proclaimed as he poured himself a glass. "Ah yes, your friends have arrived."

>
 Buffy turned to see a worried Willow and a relieved Professor McGonagall coming in the front door. They sat down next to her as Figaro plopped down another glass of Guinness, and a strange fizzing blue concoction, which he placed in front of McGonagall. "Minerva, glad to see ya! You still drink Wobbly Warlocks, dontcha?"

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 "Yes, Figaro, and thank you for taking care of Miss Summers here. We were a little worried when the wand pointed us in this direction," McGonagall addressed this last to Buffy.

>
 "Well, I was a little worried myself when the fireplace pointed me in this direction." They all laughed a little and finished their drinks. None of the three noticed a long haired female vampire

staring at Buffy from the other side of the room, twirling her empty glass.

When they left, the long-haired vampire got up and went to the phone.

>
 As they walked out into the streets, Buffy looked around in awe. "This is Diagon Alley? This is almost the creepiest place I've ever been, but then, I have been in Xander's basement."

>
 "No, this is Knockturn Alley. Its not the nicest place around. This is where some of the less ... savory elements of the wizarding world spend much of their time"

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 "So its kind of a magic red-light district?" asked Willow with a grin.

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 "What's a red light district?" McGonagall asked curiously.

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 "It's where you ... it's kinda like ... it's ... oh never mind. Where are we headed?"

"Well, as Buffy wasn't able to bring her weapons over here, Professor Dumbledore suggested that I show her Master Stoneflower's Arms Shop. You and I also have a few errands to run before you can apprentice to Professor Flitwick. Ahh, here we go." McGonagal had stopped in front of an imposing looking shop, with the name Stoneflower above the entry. We'll meet you down at Flourish and Blott's, at the corner, ok Buffy?"

"Okey-dokey, I'll just trot on in here and pick up something nice, cuddly and deadly. See ya!"

McGonagal and Willow continued down the street. "Where exactly are we going, Professor?" Willow asked.

"There is a certain step that all of our witches and wizards take, a sort of rite of passage. Since you'll be working here with us, I thought you'd like to branch out a little. Are you interested?"

"Well, sure" They stopped in front of Ollivander's. Willow looked over the door, and an excited look appeared on her face.

"Ollivanders: Makers of Fine Wands since 382 B.C. You're serious?!"

Professor McGonagall smiled at her delight. "Yes, of course. Let's go in."

>

Buffy walked around Stoneflowers, completely amazed at what she was seeing. She picked up a crossbow with ornate snake carvings all over the stock. The tag said it was once owned by Salazar Slytherin.

'Who's Salazar Slytherin and what was his thing with snakes? Must have been the Mayor's great-great demon uncle.' she said to herself.

"May I help you?" Buffy jumped as the shop owner stepped around the counter. Buffy could have sworn he was not in the room when she walked in.

Putting the crossbow down she nodded, "Yes, ... I need to equip myself for some possibly dangerous work. I may have to fight some kind of dark wizard or something."

"So you're not going after vampires on this venture." Seeing her stunned expression, he nodded. "I know it must come as a shock to you, that we recognize you on sight, but you realize we must be cautious. You have an extraordinary gift, and it bears careful observation. Do you like the crossbow?"

"Well, actually yes. I like a good distance weapon, keeps the nails in good shape. Manicures can be so expensive"

Stoniflower chuckled. "Yes, we must keep up our appearances. Well this crossbow was owned by the famous Salazar Slytherin, many years ago. It's been bewitched by a curious curse. It cannot kill snakes, but it is lethally accurate otherwise. Shall I wrap it up for you?"

"Well, I need to check my funds fir--"

Stoniflower cut her off. "Professor Dumbledore has informed me that you are on Ministry Business. Your requirements have been taken care of. Use it well, my young, lethal and beautiful one."

Buffy had a very thoughtful and quiet walk to the bookstore. She didn't see the other young-looking girl leaving Stoneflower's after her.

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Willow and the professor entered the shop. Tall stacks of boxes surrounded them. Ollivander stepped out of the back room and smiled at Professor McGonagall. "Minerva, how happy I am to see you. And you are ... an American? How delightful! Are you here for one of my wands my dear?"

"Yes please," Willow answered meekly, looking at Professor McGonagall.

Mr Ollivander took out his measuring tape and began to measure her arms, legs and hands. Willow gave a start when, as usual, Ollivander turned to get down boxes of wands and the tape continued to measure. He pulled out a long slender wand and placed it into her hand. She immediately felt a surge go through her arm. Mr Ollivander's eyebrows rose. "That is interesting. Well, the wand chooses the wizard, but I've never seen it happen quite so quickly." He picked up the box. "Willow, 13 inches, with an unusual combination inside. This is the only wand I've ever sold with both wolfsbane and werewolf hair inside. Well, well, well. The wand chooses the wizard, indeed."

Willow did not leave the shop with quite the level of elation she entered it with.

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That night, Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall held a meeting in his office with Professors Flitwick and Binns, and Giles, Buffy and Willow.

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"Professors Flitwick and Binns, we need your expert advice. The Staff of Troy has been recovered, and it is imperative that we find out the

holder's true motives."

The ghostly Professor Binns began "The Staff of Troy, an ancient artifact created by the wizard Artichus, has a long and prestigious history. It's been used to fell kingdoms, slay dragons, and infiltrate dungeons. Its story begins in 200 B.C. when --'

"Oh bother, Binns, if you start you'll put them all to sleep. Albus, are you implying that Hogwarts is in danger from the bearer of the staff?" Professor Flitwick asked.

"I'm afraid so. The latest rumour was that Colin Misbane was looking for some great source of power here at Hogwarts." Giles replied.

"Well, then, I can't waste time listening to history. I need to formulate an anti-infiltration charm right away."

"What will that require?" Dumbledore asked.

"Nothing I can't find here at Hogwart's. My young apprentice, please attend me. You will need to start practicing anyway, so you may as well start now." Willow followed Professor Flitwick out the door of Dumbledore's office.

Buffy raised her hand. "I have a question. What exactly does the staff do for this guy. You said it will allow him to pose as something harmless"

>
 Professor Dumbledore looked at Binns. Binns coughed and assumed a very serious, lecturely pose, or it would have been if you couldn't see through him.

"As I had been saying, its story begins in 200 B.C. Artichus was looking for a way to duplicate the success of the Trojan Horse. He somehow acquired a piece of the wood from the horse, and fashioned the staff from it. It took the rest of his life to summon the power to imbue the staff with its abilities. He traveled throughout the earth, seeking out the best thieves, disguise artists and anyone else who showed an expertise in surreptitious entry, Muggle or wizard. Sadly, he died when a young wizard, named, appropriately, Troy, claimed it as his own. Troy didn't keep it very long, and its history has been a series of repetitions of that. No wizard has held it longer than a few years. It was finally taken, rather forcefully, by Lady Ravenclaw, and she placed a Curse of Amnesia and a Spell of Invisibility on it, supposedly rendering it almost unfindable, and impossible to use if found. What she did with after is not known, but it has not resurfaced until now, apparently."

"What about its powers? I have to know what I'm up against. " Buffy asked again.

"It gives the bearer the ability to appear as something harmless in the eye of the beholder, and I do stress the eye of the beholder. A dragon appears awfully deadly to one of us, but would appear harmless to a wizard, with a great deal of power, such as You-know-who before his downfall."

"Does anyone know anything about Colin Misbane?" Giles asked. "He's not known to any of my contacts, so I'm hoping he's one of you."

Professor McGonagall sighed. "I suppose I should answer that. Colin was a student here about 20 years ago, in Gryffindor. He somehow lasted until his 6th year, always just barely passing his courses. In his 6th year, he destroyed the north tower when a magnification amulet, which he was not supposed to even take with him when he left charms class, fell out of his pocket and landed in his cauldron while he was mixing a potion. It was a potion of displacement, so the instead of the damage being done in the dungeon, it occurred in another part of the school. Colin was finally expelled, and his wand confiscated. The last I'd heard, he was travelling the world, charging people for finding lost objects, a magical talent he'd happened to be strong in, despite his abysmal performance in other classes."

"We need to find out what his purpose is in coming here. I don't know of any great source of power that exists here that could attract him" Dumbledore mused.

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Harry and Ron sat waiting for Professor Flitwick's class to start. "Is the new American witch going to be here today?" Harry wondered.

"I think so. This should be very interesting. I hope she can show me the American variants of all our basic spells." Hermione said excitedly.

Ron groaned. "Only Hermione would want to repeat our first three years."

Professor Flitwick entered the classroom, followed by Willow. She was wearing new robes and carrying her new wand for the first time. "Good morning class. Allow me to introduce again Miss Willow Rosenberg, my new apprentice. She has followed a rather different learning path, working through apprenticeships rather than a formal school, but I assure you, she is well able to assist me here. Miss Rosenberg, you may begin."

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Notes:

Thanks again for the good reviews. Please continue to give constructive criticism, I look forward to writing more.

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4. Intrusion!

The Staff of Troy - 4

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"Rupert, would you please come with me. Professor McGonagall and I have found a way for you to perform some simple spells in your class. You do understand the importance of keeping the students from becoming suspicious, don't you?"

"Yes, indeed. It's going to be tough enough as it is. What do you propose?"

Professor Dumbledore removed a box from the shelf behind his desk. He set it down, then tapped it with his wand, "Alohomora!" Professor McGonagall stepped forward and did the same. The box opened. Professor Dumbledore took it out and handed it gravely to Giles. "This is an extremely valuable and dangerous object. It's a Muggle Wand."

Giles hesitated, then took the wand from Dumbledore. "You can't be serious. I wouldn't even expect that something like this would exist."

"Ordinarily, we would be prohibited from crafting one, but these circumstances make it necessary. As you have no doubt surmised, it is a wand imbued with its own magic power, to the point of even allowing a Muggle to perform magic. Were it to fall into the hands of a wizard, it could potentially amplify his power substantially, at the cost of his soul. We don't handle such things lightly."

"One point you must remember," added Professor McGonagall. "You must say the spell word loudly and clearly, and you must pause a few moments after, then wave the wand. As you are not a wizard, it cannot attune to you as a wizard's wand ordinarily does."

"Certainly. I ... think I feel the need to practice this. Could one of you accompany me to a ... safe location?"

"Actually, we have anticipated this. Mr Weasley, would you please come in." A red-haired sixth-year boy walked in. "Rupert, this is George Weasley. He will help you with some basic spells." Professor Dumbledore grinned slyly. "Also, Mr Weasley happens to be a student of the highest ... initiative ... shall I say, and he should be able to give you some tips in 'concealing' your true nature, as George is very adept at that himself." Professor McGonagall worked very hard to keep the smirk off of her face.

"Thank ... you. Well Mr. Weasley, could you please, um, show me the way?" The two left the room.

Professor McGonagall turned to Dumbledore, serious again. "I really hope your faith in the Weasley twins is well-founded. They are going to have to really be on their toes to pull this off."

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Buffy walked into the dueling chamber with her crossbow and a bag of

stakes, courteously provided by the gamekeeper. She set them down, then removed her robe, leaving her clothed in the sweatshirt and jeans she was more accustomed to. Picking up two stakes, she walked out into the middle of the room, took a deep breath, and lunged at an invisible opponent. Before the stake had reached the apex of the attack, her left foot snapped out behind her, taking out another nonexistent enemy. As she brought her left leg back, she bent her right knee and tucked it under her, rolling toward her right, then snapping up into a double punch at a third attacker, then swung the stake in her left hand straight out to her side, imagining the cloud of dust that would appear next to her. Over and over she lunged, struck, kicked and rolled, following the kata she practiced with, but subtly varying it to match the moves she had learned from countless battles with the undead and about to be dead.

In the midst of a flying snap kick, her concentration was broken when she heard a slow series of claps behind her. Her kick went off balance, and she nearly fell to the floor, recovering in mid-air to land in a ready stance. She saw before her a wizard she vaguely recognized from the staff. "Ahhh, yes, the Slayer. I've so wanted to meet you," he said with a hint of contempt.

"Who might you be?"

"I am Professor Snape, the potions master at this school. I have volunteered to assist you with the dueling club. I'm sure you'll need someone who knows the students well to make your classes go smoother"

Yeah about as smooth as your personality, Buffy thought. "Well, hey, sure, the more the merrier, I guess. Would you like to practice before the students arrive?"

Smiling, Professor Snape nodded. "Who wouldn't want a chance to spar with the Slayer?" He withdrew his wand from his robes. Buffy froze.

"What are you doing?"

"Expelliarmus!" Snape shouted, pointing the wand at Buffy. The stakes flew out of her hands, landing behind her. "Petrificus!" he shouted again, waving the wand at her.

Startled at the disarming spell that she was, she didn't let him finish his spell before she was moving. She dove into a roll to her right, feeling the spell graze her leg, tightening the calf as it passed. She leapt up from the roll, vaulting over Snape's head landing by her bag. As he turned, she grabbed the crossbow and a stake then rolled to her left, narrowly avoiding the bolt of lightning that struck the floor, blowing her bag of stakes to pieces. She fired the crossbow directly at him.

Snape grimaced, then waved his wand. "Morbus Detentus." The crossbow bolt fell to the floor. He didn't see the stake flying after it. It struck his left hand, drawing his attention in that direction.

Buffy saw her opportunity and vaulted closer. Snap-kick up and Snape's wand flew into the air. Snape looked at her in fury, and swung his impaled hand at her. The stake flew out, magically accelerated toward her face. Buffy's hands flew together, catching

the stake between her palms. She instantly dropped it, as the stake caught fire in her hands. Snape grinned, then lost his grin when her foot came up, connecting with the stake and propelling it into his robes. They burst into flames immediately, as Snape had intended her clothing to do.

"Correct me if I'm wrong, but you're one of the good guys, aren't you?" She stood over him crossbow in hand, aimed at his heart.

His face furious, he opened his mouth to reply, then looked past her. Harry and Ron, along with several other students, had arrived for the club meeting to see him down on the floor with the Slayer over him. He stood up, calling his wand to him through the air, then stomped out waving it and yelling "Suffocatus!" The fire disappeared as he shut the door. As soon as he was out of sight, a wave of giggles passed over the students.

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Willow sat facing the tiny Professor Flitwick. They were in his office, going over the ingredients necessary for the anti-infiltration charm. "This is an extremely complex charm, and it requires multiple spells to be cast at the same time to execute. Do you have experience in casting spells with another witch or wizard?" he asked as he got up to get something from a cabinet.

"Well, actually, most of my spell experience is in that manner, because I'm not good enough to do them by myself yet." Willow admitted.

Professor Flitwick frowned. Suddenly, he stretched out his wand arm toward her. "Bludgerous!" A large black ball appeared, rending the air as it flew at her at full speed.

Willow blinked and raised her arms to ward it off. Instead of hitting her arms, it disappeared into a burst of flower petals, showering Willow. She looked at them in amazement. "Did you do that?"

"I did the bludger, but you did the transfiguration. You see Willow, in our world, we usually find out whether someone is a witch or wizard in a kind of accidental manner. Something happens that frightens or alarms a child, and a strange event occurs because of it. This is a sign of magical ability deep within. You apparently never had this happen before did you?"

"No, never. I just started messing around with it because it was interesting."

"Was there anything you did very, very well before you started 'messing' with magic?" he asked in an amused tone.

"Well, I am pretty good at computers ... they're a kind of Muggle magic" she quickly added at the confused look on his face.

"Pretty good? Or are you being modest?"

"Well, I've never met anyone else my age that was better," she admitted.

"Well, that was probably a means for your magic potential to express

itself. Please, try to be more confident in your magic. I should like you to remember that I plan on enjoying our time working together and teaching you, and I am not strictly thinking about this as an arrangement forced upon us by Misbane" he said kindly, with a twinkle in his little eyes. "Now, to work!"

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Buffy spent the dueling practice showing them the basic moves she used, although none of them could hope to equal her without magic. Her students gave her rapt attention, despite the complete lack of magic in her lesson. She wrapped up the lesson by kicking stakes out of the air that had been thrown at her by Crabbe, Goyle and Malfoy, who had volunteered for everything, and catching them before they hit the ground. The group erupted in applause.

"Thank you. Next class, I want you to each bring a stake and a fruit of some kind, and I will show you how to hit a moving target." The class dispersed, and she collected her things, at least those which Snape's lightning bolt had not destroyed. She stopped, looking around the room in confusion. The crossbow was missing, she ran out the door to see if one of the students had taken it, but they were already down the stairs. She gathered her things, meaning to go directly to Giles.

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"Harry, wait up!" Harry turned and saw Cho Chang, the Ravenclaw seeker and a 5th year witch. "Hi! I was wondering if you'd have a minute."

"Of course. See you upstairs, Ron" he called, then frowned at the kissing lips gestures he was making where Cho couldn't see him.
"What's up, Cho? I didn't even see you in the dueling class."

"Oh, I was in back, laughing at Draco. Listen, I've got to get some broomstick polish, and I was wondering if you'd like to go to Hogsmeade with me?" Cho's eyes pleaded with Harry as she looked at him.

Harry was flattered, but ... "Cho, this isn't a Hogsmeade weekend. How do you propose to get the polish?"

"Oh Harry, I'm sure a wizard as clever as you can figure out a way?!" she replied slyly.

"I dunno, why don't you send your owl after it, or I can send Hedwig?"

Cho's face fell. "Well, I guess. I was hoping to stop for some butterbeer, though, and maybe discuss some tactics." She gave Harry a look that melted him.

"OK, then, but follow me. I have an idea."
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"Four thimblefuls of dragonfly eyes" Professor Flitwick read out loud. Willow looked for the thimble and the basket of eyes, found them and carefully measured them out, dumping them in the middle of the cauldron, then stirring twice clockwise and thrice

counter-clockwise. She looked up. "That's about it," Professor Flitwick mumbled, dropping in the last ingredient, a chameleon skin that had been slowly cooked until it was nearly black.

"What's next?" Willow asked, not a little excitedly.

"We can perform the incantation after it has simmered for 60 seconds. When we're done, the staff's power will be limited but not broken."

"How limited?"

"The bearer will not be able to disguise himself as anything that's already on the premises. Also, its forms will only last for a few hours, rather than unlimited time as normal. It's time," he said as the spell book levitated itself and rotated around for Willow to read the spell.

"Veritas, verite, verify, veridant" Willow and Flitwick chanted over and over, counting out exactly 17 repetitions.

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Harry reached the one-eyed witch statue. "Come on, there's noone around." Cho came around the corner. "Now we simply --"

Harry didn't finish because Cho doubled over in pain. "What's wrong?"

Cho looked panicky. "Uuh, I must have had too many dragon icicles at lunch. I gotta go!" She ran down the hallway, ducking around the corner quickly.

Harry felt bad for her as he turned to go back to the Gryffindor common room. He didn't even notice that she had gone neither in the direction of Madam Pomfrey's or the Ravenclaw's staircase.

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Buffy knocked on the door of Giles' office. "Come in, please," she heard his stately voice call. He was sitting behind the desk with his feet up, waving his wand in the air, muttering under his breath. At least fourteen ferrets were sitting on the desk, watching him.

"You always mutter to an audience?" Buffy asked, pointing at the ferrets.

"What? Oh, them." Giles shook his head in frustration. "It's this wand that Professor Dumbledore gave me. It usually works, but about every five or six times I've tried a spell, one of those popped out. I don't understand it."

"At least they're friendly," Buffy commented as she took biscuits from Giles' tea saucer and fed them to the smallest one, who climbed onto her hand.

"Oh rubbish!" Giles closed the book and placed it carefully on the desk, pushing ferrets away as he did so. "Have you found anything out yet?"

"Nothing of substance, but I think I met Principal Snyder's son." She described her encounter with Snape to Giles, who sat shaking his head.

"Buffy, please try not to antagonize him. We will probably need every wizard and witch on the staff to catch Misbane."

"That reminds me, I think we'll need the help of some of the teachers. My crossbow disappeared after class today. I don't want to suspect the students, but I think it should be found."

"Yes, of course. Especially since you may need it when we actually do find Misbane."

"Giles, I'm a little worried about that. He's human. What do I do when I catch him?"

"Professor Dumbledore is working on that for you. I suppose he'll be telling us his solution in due time."

Buffy got up. "Well, I suppose I should be going."

"Yes, you probably should patrol. Look out for anything unusual."

"In a school of witchcraft? Something unusual? Don't get your hopes up!" Buffy smirked.

"Oh, right." Giles sighed as he took out the spell book. Buffy closed the door, but not before she saw another ferret appear on his desk.

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Harry caught up with Ron at the picture leading to the Gryffindor common room. "Ooh, Harry, what happened? She change her mind because of that brush-off you gave her in the last game? That was the best catch you've made yet." Ron was referring to the last Quidditch match between Gryffindor and Ravenclaw, when Harry had almost knocked her off her broom when he zoomed between her hands to grab the snitch.

"No, she felt a little sick. Too many icicles at lunch, she said."

"What? She wasn't at lunch today, Harry."

"What do you mean?"

"She was in the library with Hermione, and they took sandwiches with them. Something about Hermione doing an independent study on moles and digging charms."

"Are you sure? She did look pretty sick. Oh, there's Jordan! Jordan, can I borrow this month's copy of Which Broomstick?"

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"Come in."

"Aah, yes, Professor Dumbledore, are you busy?" Giles asked.

"No not at all. Please sit down." Albus waved his wand and a platter of tea and biscuits appeared on the desk. The cups pranced to their places before Dumbledore and Giles, while the tea floated out of the spout of the pot into the cups. "What can I do for you?"

"Have you ever had any problems with theft here?"

"No, not really. Is there something missing?"

"Yes, well. Buffy purchased a crossbow at Stoneflower's, and it has turned up missing after her lesson tonite. It's apparently very valuable. The proprietor said it had belonged to some wizard named Slytherin, many years ago. Some kind of enchantment, can't hurt snakes I think she said ..." Giles stopped, noticing the surprised look on Dumbledore's face. "Is something wrong?"

Professor Dumbledore waved his wand, and a megaphone appeared. "Attention all faculty: Report to the teacher's lounge immediately." He snapped his finger and the megaphone disappeared. "We need to go," he said to Giles. "Salazar Slytherin never owned a crossbow. He despised Muggles, and would never touch anything that even resembled a Muggle tool."

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Buffy and Willow hurried down the corridor to the teacher's lounge. "What's going on?" Willow asked.

"I dunno, but that was strangest page I've ever heard."

They entered the room to see Professor Dumbledore with a very grave expression on his face. "Good wizards and witches, we have a problem. We thought that Misbane was in the school when we first discussed this. We turned out to be incorrect, but that hardly matters now. Misbane is here."

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5. The Search Begins

The Staff of Troy - 5

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Professor McGonagall broke the silence that followed Dumbledore's statement. "Are you sure? He's been sighted, or is there some other confirmation?"

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 "Apparently, he has been much cleverer than any of us thought. He infiltrated the school in the form of one of Miss Summer's weapons."

Buffy recoiled in horror, barely hearing the buzz in the room from all of the professors. 'The crossbow,' she thought. 'How could I be fooled like that, but Dumbledore was the one who sent me to that shop.' "Professor, isn't Stoneflower one of your friends?" she asked.

"Yes, he is indeed, and it is impossible for me to believe that he

was involved. Misbane must have done something to him. Of course, anyone could have pretended to be Stoneflower in the shop and sold you the crossbow. I most certainly should have accompanied you. My humblest apologies, Miss Summers. That reminds me." Turning to Hagrid, "Please go down to Diagon Alley right now and check on Stoneflower. I will meet you at his shop shortly." Hagrid left immediately.

Professor Snape jumped to his feet. "Professor Dumbledore, I must again voice my objections to involving these outsiders. This is wizard business, and Muggles should not be here!" he declared angrily. Buffy looked at him with distaste, but a cold ball formed in her stomach. If a wizard had gone to the shop, they would have seen through the ruse instantly.

"Severus, please! Professors Giles and Rosenberg are here now, as is the Slayer. They have come here of their own free will to assist us. Without them, we would not have even known of his plot, and he would probably still be here, disguised as something else." Professor Dumbledore calmly stared at Snape until he sat down. "Professor Flitwick, have you had any luck in countering the staff?"

"Well, we don't know for sure, but I believe we did. The spell completed successfully, so he shouldn't be able to masquerade as a student or faculty member, at least not on the grounds."

"Excellent. Good witches and wizards of Hogwarts, please be on your guard, and keep aware of anything that doesn't appear to belong here. If he's in the school now, he's got to be in the form of something that doesn't already exist here. Good evening."

As Willow and Buffy left the room, Giles tapped Buffy's shoulder. "Don't take this too badly. You are in unfamiliar territory and cannot expect to pick up on all of this immediately." Giles turned and walked back to his office with Dumbledore.

"Where are you going?" Willow asked anxiously as Buffy headed off toward the stairs, rather than toward their room.

"Patrol. It's even more important now that I've screwed up so badly." She turned without another word and walked up the stairs.

"Miss Summers!" called a voice behind Willow. She turned to see Snape. He pointed his wand at picture on the wall next to Buffy. The crossbow in the hands of the warrior pictured there jumped out into her hands. "Try to keep better track of this one."

"Thank you Professor Snape. Perhaps you'd like to accompany me?" she said icily, despite the comfort she felt in having a weapon again.

"Delighted," he replied in a voice almost as cold, withdrawing his wand and following her up the stairs. They were both oblivious to Willow's stare, and the plaintive cries of the warrior in the picture, who was now unarmed against a very large dragon.

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> <p>"Well, what should we do now?" Giles and Dumbledore had returned to their tea. "Oooh," Giles made a face. <p>

"Cold?" Dumbledore asked. At Giles' nod, Dumbledore raised his wand. "Wait, allow me," said Giles. Dumbledore hesitated, looking over Giles' shoulder with a worried look, then shrugged and nodded. Giles raised his wand and said "Reversus!" The tea flowed through the air back to the pot. There was a whoosh as the steam from the room returned to the pot. Giles raised his wand again, and the tea flowed out to the cups again, piping hot.

"Very good," Dumbledore said as he took a sip. Giles raised his own cup and took a sip. "Strange, I thought it was Earl Grey, before, but this tastes like Darjeeling." He shook his head, then continued. "I'm going to spend some time in your library. I need to find out more about this Staff. I'm particularly interested in anything that can tell me how to destroy it, and whether there are any spot reversals that can affect it."

"Well, there are some good references there. I'd start with the *History of Magic*, then *The Amulet's Journey*. They should have some good information. I've looked through them myself, but I don't have quite the gift for research that a Watcher would have."

"Well, thank you. We do try our best, but this is a bit more than I've bit off before." Giles chewed a biscuit thoughtfully. "How did Lady Ravenclaw find the staff? Is there any record of that?"

"Sadly, the History of Magic is the only book I know of that covers that event, and it's very sparse. I think that may be by design."

"Well, that certainly makes sense. Well, we need to go see Hagrid, don't we."

"Certainly." Professor Dumbledore drained his cup before they walked out, smiling at the clear taste of Earl Grey in his cup.
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Willow sat on her bed, looking at her laptop's glowing screen. She was scrolling through a list of spells for the next day's class. 'Hmm, a charm to make things hotter on demand..,' she thought. "Soliosa!" she said quietly as she pointed the wand at her glass of water. The water began to steam, then boil. She turned back to her computer. 'Querioma, a spell to find answers to questions. Cartocher, a spell to find direction.' She shut the screen of the laptop. She lay back, ready for tomorrow's lesson. CRACK! She jumped off the bed, grabbing her wand, then put it down. Her glass had split when the water had boiled away. "Yes, that is a handy spell," she muttered to herself.
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Giles, Hagrid and Dubledore were meanwhile at Hagrid's shack, looking down at Stoneflower, who was laying on Hagrid's sofa with a cloth on his forehead. "He really should be brought to Madam Pomfrey's," Dumbledore began, but was waved off by Stoneflower.

"Albus I'm fine. It's just a crack on the head. Give me some more of that fine tea, Rubeus, my good man," he said as he sat up.

"Mr Stoneflower, my name is Rupert Giles. I'm here to assist in this situation." Giles put out his hand, which Stoneflower shook heartily.

"Sebastian, please. Noone calls me Mister, makes me feel too old." Albus grinned, as he and Stoneflower had been at Hogwarts together as first years. "Now, you want to know about the lass who did this to me, don't you?"

"Yes, that would be helpful. Was she someone you recognized?"

"No, but she may be someone you recognize. She was someone you'd be more likely to be acquainted with." He said this with a raised eyebrow.

Giles paused in thought, then grimaced. "A vampire." he sighed tiredly.

"Any doubts we had about keeping your team involved are certainly dispelled." Professor Dumbledore commented to Giles. "Any thoughts as to how she fooled Buffy? The Slayer would have known immediately?"

After a moment, Stoneflower nodded slowly. "Well, I do keep numerous masquerade charms for sale, albeit none as powerful or accursed as that dreadful staff you're after."

"Hmm. This does make things a little more difficult, doesn't it?" mused Giles. "How are we fixed here for dealing with vampires?"

"The usual, enchanted mirrors everywhere that shriek when people don't reflect, a good supply of garlic, etc." Albus responded.

"Well, that helps some. If a vampire or group of vampires is assisting Misbane, then he has to leave school grounds to consort with him. We should try to look for unusual happenings at the edge of the grounds." Giles jotted some notes down as he spoke.

"I'll get the dogs checking the boundary to the Forbidden forest at once, sir." Hagrid stepped out the back door, Fang following him out the door.

"Had you ever met this vampiress before?" Giles asked.

"No, she wasn't regular clientele. Those folk usually go to my competitor's shop in Knockturn Alley."

"Well, that's a start. I've got to get to the library and start looking for reasons why a vampire would be involved."

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Buffy and Snape heard Hagrid calling the hounds to the boundary of the forest. They were standing in the courtyard, looking for any evidence of Misbane. "Hagrid's hounds are fairly dependable. They should find anything out there," Snape told her. They turned back to the courtyard, checking doorways for forced entry.

"Here." Buffy called Snape over. The door she was pointing to looked normal enough.

"What?"

"The bottom of the door." She pointed, and Snape saw the string leading out from under the door. She pulled on it, and the knob turned, the door swinging open.

"Excellent," Snape replied, surprising Buffy. She looked at him and he was almost smiling. She turned away from the door and walked back to the edge of the courtyard, looking for clues to his path to the doorway.

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At breakfast the next morning, Harry and Ron were discussing the Suffolk Sword's quidditch match of the night before, and arguing noisily about Suffolk's chances against Chudley the next week, when the mail arrived. Harry looked up happily when Hedwig dropped off two small bags. "Good, it's here. Excuse me." He took the bags and walked over to where Cho was sitting.

"Hi Harry, what's up?"

"Hey I just brought you this." He reached into the first bag and pulled out a bottle of broomstick polish then with a sly grin pulled a warm bottle of butterbeer out of the other bag. "Hope that hits the spot."

"Gee, thank you Harry, but what's the occasion?" she asked as she turned the cap off the bottle of butterbeer. "Mmmh that smells wonderful." She put the cap back on then placed it in her bag to enjoy later. (Quentin Buttersmith's invention of forever warm, forever fresh beer bottles the previous year had transformed the butterbeer trade.)

"Huh? You wanted to go get those last night?" said Harry curiously.

"I did? Then you know me better than I know myself. I was studying with Theresa last night. Oh gotta go" she exclaimed as the bell rang.

Harry walked over to get his bag. "You look like someone just stepped on your wand. Something wrong Harry?" Hermione asked as they trotted off to class with Ron.

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 "Yeah, I think." Hermione looked at him curiously. "I know I talked to Cho last night after dueling practice, but she doesn't have any memory of it."

"That's very unusual. What do you thinks going on?"

"Maybe one of the Slytherins is messing with amnesia charms."

Hermione looked thoughtful, then shook her head. "No, those are very difficult. I tried one last summer and it didn't work at all. It backfired and I spent the whole next week remembering everything I did the first six months of my life. I don't think any of the Slytherins could do it." At Harry's giggle, she slapped him. "What's so funny?"

"The great Hermione. Of course, if you can't do it ... Ouch! That's gonna leave a mark."

"Well, whatever happened, it can wait until after charms. I can't wait until Miss Willow shows us that heat charm."

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On the other side of the great hall, Snape and Buffy were showing Giles and Dumbledore the string they had untied from the door. "Well, it's still a string, so this is definitely not Misbane himself." Dumbledore said. "Did you replace it, so he won't know we've discovered it?" At their nods, he turned to Prof. Flitwick, who was walking up. "See what you can do with this, please." Professor Flitwick took the string and headed back to his office.

Buffy and Giles walked off, then stopped as Snape called, "Miss Summers, can I have a moment of your time?"

"Go ahead, Giles, I'll catch up with you tonite." She turned to Snape as Giles walked up the stairs to his office. "Yes?" she said sweetly to Snape.

"Professor Dumbledore and I agree that we should keep watch on that doorway. You, as the Slayer have a particular ability to camouflage yourself against our charms, and should be invisible to any exposure spells he may use before he tries to enter through the door."

"Good idea. I'll be there tonite."

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Harry, Ron and Hermione enjoyed Willow's lesson greatly, casting heat charms at their cauldrons and watching them boil. After the lesson, they dropped their bags off and headed for lunch. "I can't wait to try that on Fred and George!" Ron said with a smirk on his face. "Flitwick didn't teach that to them, so I'll catch them by surprise."

"Yeah, this Professor Rosenberg is fascinating. She teaches so differently from our other professors." Hermione was, of course, ecstatic about all the homework they had for Professor Rosenberg's new curriculum.

Harry heard a voice behind him call, "Hey, Harry, look at this." He turned to see George behind him. "Check this out Harry. It's a Reversa-Stick."

"A what?"

"A Reversa-Stick. It lets you fly backwards on your broom. Practice with it tonite. I've got an idea for our next match against Slytherin."

"Is it legal?" Harry asked.

George just laughed and walked off.

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Giles looked up at the knock on the door. "Come," he answered.

"Hey, just wanted to let you know I'm heading out for patrol. Or I guess I mean guard duty." She rolled her eyes. "Have you found anything yet?"

"No I haven't got the slightest idea why vampires would be interested in this staff. It doesn't seem to be able to give them the ability to enter a place they haven't been invited into, even if they are masquerading, so I can't see what good it would do them."

"Call Willow down. I'm sure she'd like to help find this too."

"Yeah, you're probably right."

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Later that night, Harry Ron and Hermione were in the Gryffindor common room. "I wonder how this works?" Harry mused, pulling the Reversa-Stick out of his pocket.

"Harry, I don't think that's a good idea." Hermione started.

"Oh, please, Hermione, you don't think anything's a good idea, unless it's studying!" Ron blustered at her.

Harry grinned and waved the stick around idly. Neville, who happened to be walking by them, started walking backward, his face breaking into a scared look.

"Oops, sorry Neville." Harry exclaimed as he waved it again. Neville stopped his backward motion, and was able to get up the stairs, which he did even quicker now.

"That's amazing!" Ron cried. "Let me try." He took it from Harry's outstretched hand and waved it at the clock in the corner. The hands started moving backward. He waved it again, and they righted themselves. "This is neat!" He whirled around a little to quickly to show it to Hermione, who had just stood up from her chair. Crookshanks, her cat, jumped out of her lap just as the Reversa-Stick in Ron's hand waved in front of her.

"Crookshanks!" Hermione cried out, as the cat's jump forward became a reverse flight out the window, breaking the window pane as she went. "Ron, how could you?" Hermione burst out, then ran to the window to look. Harry looked over her shoulder.

Crookshanks was lying on the ground beneath the window. "Crookshanks, here kitty" called Hermione to no avail. "What did you do to my cat, Ron?"

"Hermione, take it easy, it was an accident," Harry said to her.
"She's just stunned from the fall and hitting the window." He turned and used his wand to fix the window.

"What are we going to do? We can't leave her out there! We've got to go out there and get her"

Harry looked at the miserable look on her face, then at Ron's embarrassed look, then sighed and went to get his invisibility cloak and Marauder's Map.

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Many characters in this story, now too numerous to mention, are the creations of J.K. Rowling and Joss Whedon. My thanks to these two fine artists for their contributions to this genre.

6. The Map

Chapter 6

Chapter 6

Of course, in a scheme by now way too familiar, Harry, Ron and Hermione had to wait until everyone was in bed before they could put on the robe and sneak out. Naturally, they had to avoid Finch and his cat, and had a very close call when Peeves floated right through the cloak and them. They exited the castle through the door behind the Cyclops painting in the main hall (Cyclops was busy chasing Odysseus and didn't notice)

"Those trees look so beautiful at night," whispered Hermione as they took off the robe.

Harry and Ron just shrugged, as the trees at night were a common sight to them, and merely looked like, well, trees.

"Now, we turn right from our stairs to get to the main hall, so Crookshanks should be ... that way!" Harry pointed, then started walking.

"Oh I do hope he's all right!" Hermione whimpered, then glared at Ron. "I told you two it wasn't a good idea!"

"Well, if you hadn't jumped up like that!" Ron hissed, his ears turning red. It wasn't as though he didn't know it was his fault, but he wouldn't admit it to Hermione.

"Sshhh!" Harry whispered. "There he is. He's fine." Hermione sighed with relief as she saw Crookshank's tail twitching. She picked him up and started stroking his fur. They turned and started walking back to the secret exit.

"Meowr!" Crookshanks howled then leapt from Hermione's arms, running in the other direction. Harry, Ron and Hermione started to follow, then jumped in the bushes when they heard a sound behind them. Harry

had just gotten the cloak over them when Fang came around the corner.

"Oh, Fang, why now?" Ron moaned. The three of them got up and followed Fang around the corner. Crookshanks was on top of a bush, hissing at Fang. Hermione reached up and pulled him down, under the cloak. Fang stopped barking with a grunt, looking around.

"Here Professor, Fang's found something," they heard Hagrid's voice. Then Hagrid and Snape came around the corner.

"Well, Rubeus, what has he found, a squirrel?" snarled Snape, stomping off, leaving Hagrid to scratch his head at Fang's behavior. The three of them followed Hagrid and Fang quietly. They stopped just as Hagrid caught up to Snape.

"Hagrid, here in the passage the intruder used to exit the school. Did you know it existed?" Snape pointed at the blank brick wall in front of them.

"What passage?" Hagrid asked as he pressed the wall, to no avail.

Snape snorted, then pulled a small potion bottle out of his cloak. He pulled the stopper, then placed a drop on his palm. After placing the bottle back in his pocket, he clapped his hands, then blew gently on the cloud of potion that formed. A rectangle of light appeared on the wall. Hagrid smiled and nodded, then pushed on the wall. Still to no avail.

"The light is red. That means the door only opens outward. Still, you should do something about it. I'll notify Dumbledore, then someone can keep watch on the door." Snape marched off. Hagrid, walked off in the other direction.

"What are we gonna do? They'll be keeping an extra tight watch tonight! We can't go in the front door." Hermione looked at the two of them in worry.

"Calm down, we've got the map." Harry sat down to study it. "Hey, there's a entrance right here. It's by the dueling room, so we can come in that way, then if anyone asks, we can say we were practicing. Let's go!"

They walked around the castle looking for the doorway. They watched the map, waiting until their dots on the map were lined up with the doorway on the map. "Here it is, and there's noone anywhere near it inside. Hermione, do your stuff"

With an exasperated look on her face, Hermione shifted Crookshanks to her left arm, then withdrew her wand. "Alohomora!" The doorway opened and they walked through.

Harry pulled the cloak off of them. "Whew, let's get bac--"

"Don't move a muscle, any of you!"

The three of them froze, then slowly turned. Buffy stood there, crossbow aimed at them. "Uh, Professor Summers ..." Ron stammered, then shut his mouth, as he had no idea how to explain this.

Harry's shocked look must have convinced Buffy, as she dropped her crossbow and gave them all a dirty look. "What are you doing!? Don't you know you could have been killed?!" Harry, jaw still dropped, looked from Buffy to the map repeatedly.

"You're ... not here, I mean ... not there, I mean not on the ..." he drifted off.

"What are you talking about? And don't you three have a curfew?"

"We went to get my cat. She fell out the window and I was afraid she was hurt." Hermione, as usual, knew the best way to talk to a teacher. She held up Crookshanks, who Buffy reached out and petted.

"Well, then, you have your cat, now get out of here." They looked nervously around, then Harry looked at the map again.

"Quickly, Snape's coming." Harry took off into the dueling room, followed by the other two. Buffy closed the door and sighed as Snape came into view. She failed to see the eyes looking at her from the forest.

"Well?" he asked.

"Well, what?"

"The door's been opened. My potion signaled me. "

"Oh, that. I heard something scratching, so I opened it to look. It was a student's cat, so I let it in. Miss Granger's, I think"

"Oh, well I had hoped you had ... oh never mind." He waved his wand, and a second stool appeared next to Buffy's. He sat down.

Buffy yawned, then apologized. "Sorry, don't mean to be rude."

Snape had a cross look on his face, then thought better of it. "No, no, don't worry at all. Would you like some tea?"

"Not really a tea drinker. Can I get a cappuccino around here ... guess not, tea it is" she said as she saw the puzzled look on his face.

He let a drop of liquid fall from a bottle onto the floor, and a tea tray appeared on yet a third stool.

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Harry, Ron and Hermione took the cloak off in the Gryffindor common room. "That was close," Hermione said. "I'm going to bed!" then shuffled up the stairs.

Harry sat there, looking at the map. "What's the matter, Harry? You've looked spooked ever since we came in. What's got you so surprised?"

"You mean besides looking at the wrong end of Professor Summer's crossbow? This!" He pointed to the map, specifically at the doorway they just came in. There was a dot for Snape, but none for Summers.

"That's a little strange. Maybe it doesn't show Americans ... oh wait, there's Professor Rosenberg."

"Why doesn't she show up on the map?"

"Well, that not nearly as strange a question as, 'Why was she waiting there with a crossbow?'" Ron grimaced. "She almost skewered us!"

"This is strange. She's not a normal instructor, is she?"

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"So, how does one become an professor in a school for Wizards?" Buffy asked.

"Well, Miss Summers, I've studied potions for quite a while, and Professor Dumbledore gave me a chance when I was a little ... down I guess is the right word. I suppose it would be just as easy for you to explain how one becomes the Slayer."

"Well, unfortunately, its because someone died. The previous slayer was killed, and I was ... Chosen. Not a very satisfying explanation, I guess. How long have you been here, Professor Snape?"

"Call me Severus, you are a teacher here now." Snape tried to smile, but it came off a little forced.

"Well, Severus, you can call me Buffy." she said a little tentatively

"I've been here about 14 years. I attended here as a boy."

"Oh, I guess that makes it better, being a wizard in a school full of wizards. Me, I was the only supernatural freak in my high school."

"Oh, that actually sounds a little interesting. Did the Muggles there look down on you because of it?" Severus didn't realize it, but as soon as he stopped forcing the smile, it was replaced by a more natural looking smile.

"Actually, we kinda kept my 'specialness' a secret. People knew there was something strange about me, but it just wasn't an open topic of discussion." Talking about her past was not something that normally made Buffy comfortable, but she was strangely relaxed here. "Giles and Willow and the gang were the only ones who knew the whole truth. Oh, and Angel."

"Angel?"

"In your world, you probably know of him as Angelus."

"Ah, yes the vampire with a soul. He's quite well known in our world. I believe Flitwick is distantly related to the tribe of gypsies that cursed him."

'Small world.' Buffy observed wryly.

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Giles sat in his office, looking finally at a picture of the staff. It had taken him days, but he had finally found a book with its picture. Madam Pince had found it, just an hour ago and had brought it down to him, along with a pot of her "very special tea." He'd chatted with her for the hour about the history of the book in his hands, and she had only just left. "Amazing woman. Her talent for research exceeds that of anyone on the Council."

He read on until the end, then put the book down in frustration. There was a knock on the door. "Come in."

Dumbledore walked in. "Studies going well?"

"There is no known procedure for destroying it, at least according to Mildred Mousewhite." he said, glancing at the author's name on the book.

"Well, she is the expert," Albus said kindly. "What about an impervious flame charm?" he asked as he sat down.

Giles picked up the book. "'Partridge McIlhenny Borealis attempted to destroy the staff with an impervious flame charm in 204. He was engulfed in flame himself, then blown into the sky by the ensuing explosion.'"

"I've always wondered why my Great-Grandmother went to Norway on vacation. She always said she was visiting family."

"Well, Willow and I will search some of our references. Given our lack of innate magic, our history may have developed stronger potions to compensate. Any luck with the physical searches?"

"Severus found an exit from the castle today, but it was one way only. Miss Summers is still guarding the suspect entrance?"

At Giles's nod, Dumbledore rose. "It's time to put these weary bones to bed."

"Myself also. Goodnight, Albus"

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 Harry and Ron were still puzzling over the map at breakfast the next morning. "Whatever do you think is going on?" Harry asked Ron.

"I simply don't know. She's different, to say the least. I mean look at her; she even gets along with Snape!"

At the head table, Professors Snape and Summers were deep in conversation, almost ignoring their breakfasts.

Hermione, plopped down across from Ron. "What's the matter?" Ron asked, looking at her puffy eyes.

"Crookshanks is gone again! He came to bed with me, but now he's gone."

Many characters in this story, now too numerous to mention, are the creations of J.K. Rowling and Joss Whedon. My thanks to these two fine artists for their contributions to this genre.

End
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